

Community enterprises as boundary organisations aiding small town revival: exploring the potential

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Abstract

Revival of small towns has often been slow. To counteract previous ineffective responses, improved governance is often required at the small town level. This paper explores the potential for community enterprises (CEs) to support such efforts. Whilst the efforts of CEs can be salient to small town revival, drawing on the boundary organisation literature, a “dual accountability” is also required of local legitimacy and external credibility. By uniquely providing a combination of professional skills, enterprise underpinnings and a focus on ‘community of place’, the case study findings suggest CEs can undertake the necessary long-term boundary-spanning work to achieve “dual accountability”. However, success in deprived contexts will require public subsidy and an acceptance that CE success, if it occurs, is likely to take many years. Through exploring the efficacy of CEs within small town revival, this paper adds to wider international debates on the role of community leadership within place-based revival.

Introduction

For small towns located close to large urban areas, with heritage and/or within areas of natural amenity, the prospects for amenity-led revival are often favourable (Green, 2010; Powe and Hart, 2017). However, not all towns have such potential. Following decline in their traditional industries, many towns have struggled to reinvent themselves (Powe and Hart, 2008; Markey et al., 2012; Wirth et al., 2016; Powe, 2018). Where revival has occurred, in-depth studies have illustrated how positive efforts have often been required for perhaps a generation before a transformational change is realised (Barnes and Hayter, 1992; Smith, 1998; Paradis, 2000; Markey et al., 2012; Burayidi, 2013; Powe et al., 2015). Revival usually results from taking advantage of a series of ‘moments of opportunity’ (Healey, 2007; Powe and Hart, 2017). For some towns there are, however, very few positive forces of change upon which to build even a partial revival. There are simply too many other, less risky, places to invest where the potential return is higher (Nel and Stevenson, 2014; Wirth et al., 2016; Powe and Pringle, 2017). Whilst the death of towns is rare, for some settlements merely stabilizing population losses and economic decline can be a significant challenge (Tonts, 2000; Wirth et al., 2016; Powe, 2018).

In the context of limited opportunity, recognising the potentialities for positive activity is essential and there needs to be effective governance (Westerhausen and Macbeth, 2003; Courtney et al., 2008; Powe and Pringle, 2017). For this to be achieved, it is argued, there is a need for sustained professional support at the small town level. Whilst external support might be available, it tends to lack the necessary understanding of local issues/potential, be highly prescriptive and short-term in nature (Vangen and Huxham, 2003; Edwards et al., 2000; Osborne et al., 2004; Markey et al., 2012; Burayidi, 2013; Powe et al., 2015). As Powe et al. (2015: 198) suggests, ‘government agencies represent temporary partners within the long-term processes of change’. Although local leadership is required, revival partnerships based primarily on volunteer time often lack animation, direction and the necessary delivery mechanisms to manage change (Osborne et al., 2004; O’Toole and Burdess, 2004; Markey et al., 2012). In the absence of professional support, settlement-level volunteer organisations are likely to struggle to address some of the challenging issues faced, such as the physical constraints of land assembly, infrastructure provision, remediation of contaminated land and removal/reorientation of outdated structures (Powe et al., 2015). Local actors may also lack the ‘innovation, experimentation, risk taking and entrepreneurship’ required to tackle otherwise intractable regeneration challenges (Williams, 2002; 107).

How can sustained professional support be provided at the small town level? As the direct employment of funded professional support at the small town level has usually proven to be an unsustainable option (Powe et al., 2007; Countryside Agency, 2004; Molden et al., 2017), an alternative route to such provision is required. One way might be through commercial activity. Indeed, there is a growing realisation of the important roles of social enterprise (SE) within place-based revival. Social enterprises are ‘controlled by their members and have social as well as economic aims’ (Somerville and McElwee, 2011: 329). Small towns can benefit from the services that they provide to local communities (for example, training and skills development, office space and local foods) and their physical location within the towns (for example, jobs created, new uses for redundant buildings and the protection/renewal of environmental/heritage resources) (Gore et al., 2006; Somerville and McElwee, 2011; Eversole et al., 2013). Whilst supportive of small town revival these organisations may not contribute significantly to small town governance.

One type of social enterprise, referred to here as community enterprise (CE), may provide more potential. CEs are independent not-for-profit organisations, which are owned and/or managed

to some degree by community members, working in and for their ‘community of place’ (Somerville and McElwee, 2011; Bailey, 2012; Kleinhans, 2017). Whilst CEs are of UK origin, they have also been adapted to the Dutch context and have parallels with Community Development Corporations (CDCs) in the US (Varady et al., 2015; Kleinhans, 2017). Although they may take a decade, or even decades, to become established and financially stable (Wallace, 2002; Bailey, 2012), building up a portfolio of assets, CEs can become resilient organisations (Bailey, 2012). As with other SEs, their enterprise nature adds to local innovation and, reflecting the diversity of small town contexts, enables a ‘high level of contingency in that each community enterprise evolves to different local conditions, the availability of assets and access to funding’ (Bailey, 2017: 230).

Taking advantage of their professional expertise/capacity situated within their ‘community of place’, there is potential for CEs to extend beyond their roles as SEs. Indeed, whilst some CEs have grass root origins, many were set up as development trusts to provide local leadership on a range of external funded regeneration projects (Clark et al., 2007; Connelly, 2010; Valchovska and Watts 2016). CEs are conceptualised here as professional organisations operating at the boundary between the various individuals and organisations involved in small town revival. Drawing from the literature on boundary organisations, if they are to be effective, their activities need to be salient to the process and seen as legitimate and credible by all the relevant parties (Cash et al., 2003). Whilst previous policy has focused on the salience of regeneration partnerships to the revival task, issues of legitimacy and credibility have often been neglected (Connelly, 2010; Powe et al., 2015; Molden et al., 2017). By considering their salience, legitimacy and credibility, this paper explores if CEs can become effective boundary organisations. By critically reviewing previous literature on CEs and analysing the results of interviews within a range of towns and contexts, this paper situates this assessment of CEs within the international context of small town revival.

Understanding the challenge

Professional expertise is required to work at the boundary between the relevant actors within the community (residents, employers, town councils and community-based partnerships) and at the boundary between town level actors and the relevant external actors (regeneration funding bodies, local authorities and other servicing agencies) (O’Toole and Burdess, 2004; Connelly, 2010; Molden et al., 2017). If this boundary activity can be achieved it may provide a ‘collaborative advantage’ to small town revival efforts (Vangen and Huxham, 2003; Powe et al., 2015).

Collaboration at the small town level is often constrained by longstanding rivalries, where splintered activities and contestation concerning possible directions for change are likely to constrain the potential for revival (Edwards et al., 2001; Countryside Agency, 2004; Osborne et al., 2004; Daniels et al., 2007; Powe et al., 2015). Markey et al., (2012; 176: 214) suggest that for collaboration to occur there will often need to be a ‘profound political culture change among local elected leaders and the local electorate alike’. Whilst attempts to impose this through external prescription are unlikely to be successful, locally situated CEs might be more effective (Powe et al., 2015).

Beyond the towns themselves, small town actors are also challenged to collaborate effectively with a range of external bodies and departments, each with their own timescales and ‘foci of attention’ (Healey, 2007: 4). These external organisations need to coordinate their activities across many small and dispersed rural settlements. Cooperation between servicing/local authorities and rural partnerships is often poor, such that small town actors often feel remote

from more urban focused authorities (Jeffreys and Munn, 1996; O'Toole and Burdess, 2004; Owen et al., 2007; Powe et al., 2015). A 'collaborative advantage' might be achievable, however, if communities develop a 'collective voice' for a given town or wider rural area (Healey, 2015; Powe et al., 2015). Alternatively, local communities could become providers themselves through community asset transfer (Bailey, 2012). Whilst many communities lack the necessary skills and/or willingness to take the risks involved in such social enterprises, CEs are well placed to take advantage of the opportunities arising.

Lastly, the governance process developed must match the long-term, complex/multi-dimensional nature of revival, involving many actors and sensitive to locally specific challenges (Powe et al., 2015). This does not fit well with pressures for short-term political expediency of external government bodies (Vangen and Huxham, 2003; Edwards et al., 2000; Osborne et al., 2004; Markey et al., 2012; Burayidi, 2013). Indeed, Powe et al. (2015: 198) suggests the 'need to separate regeneration processes from transitory political priorities at all levels', including town-level councils. Faced with political realities of transitory support for rapid delivery, there is a need for innovation in town-level governance. Guided by 'political satisfaction' (Rose, 2005, 2), local partnerships 'often face real political and organisational difficulties in moving from low-risk, traditional projects to more creative, risky, challenging ventures' (Boyle, 1993, 322). Risk averse politicians are unlikely to find solutions to the often long-term intractable regeneration challenges. Risk taking and innovation is required.

Boundary organisations and achieving a 'collaborative advantage'

Drawing on boundary-spanning literature provides an understanding of how effective governance outcomes can be achieved (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981; Williams, 2002; van Meerkerk et al., 2017). However, this literature focuses mostly on the individuals undertaking boundary-spanning activities, rather than the challenges facing organizations such as CEs with place-based goals. The conceptual idea of 'boundary organisations' was developed by Guston (1999) to describe organisations working at the boundary between science and policy, or, in the context of place-based revival, the combination of expertise (internal and external) and an understanding of local and external politics/policy.

Cash et al. (2003) demonstrates how boundary organisations are most likely to be effective when they are salient, credible and legitimate. In this context, their work needs to be salient to the processes of small town revival but also locally legitimate and viewed as a credible voice and delivery agent by external organisations. Clearly CEs must be viewed as legitimate and credible by all concerned. However, if CEs are viewed as locally legitimate then the key concern for external organizations is likely to be their credibility. Likewise, small town actors need to have confidence in the professional expertise of CEs, but, as will be described below, this is likely to emerge from their substantive legitimacy. If CEs are delivering favourable outcomes, they are likely to become both credible and legitimate.

Boundary organisations build a 'bridge between divergent worlds' in a way that 'reinforces convergent interests while allowing divergent ones to persist' (O'Mahony and Bechky, 2008: 426). It is the role of the boundary organisation to understand and emphasise convergent interests as they act as an intermediary between town level actors and, also, between town level and external actors. By attenuating their 'most critical differences' a solution can be found that works for most of the individuals involved (O'Mahony and Bechky, 2008: 431). The success of a boundary organization involves 'pleasing [these] two sets of principals', such that a 'dual accountability' is achieved that addresses the 'interests, concerns, and perspectives of actors on both sides of the boundary' (Guston, 2001: 401; Cash et al., 2001: 8089). Both sides of the

boundary will need to compromise and adapt ‘their organizing practices’ (O’Mahony and Bechky, 2008; 431).

Salience – undertake effective boundary-spanning work

Cash et al. (2003) defines salience in terms of the relevance of the organisation to the needs of decision makers. It was noted earlier how CEs can benefit the towns directly through their enterprise activity, whether that be in terms of the services/goods they produce and/or the location of the production of these in the town itself. This is salient to small town revival and, as will be demonstrated, importantly also helps bring an innovative/entrepreneurial culture to revival efforts (van Meerkerk et al., 2017). The focus here, however, is on how CEs can extend beyond their roles as social enterprises to undertake salient boundary work. Whilst the personal traits required by boundary-spanning individuals remain difficult to define (e.g. communicating, listening, empathizing, conflict resolution) (Williams, 2003), through a combination of boundary management and professional competence in place-based revival, CEs may enhance the capacity of small towns to revive.

Working at various boundaries, informational boundary-spanning is crucial (Tushman and Scanlan, 1981). CE staff need to understand the jargon, language, key drivers and culture within external organisations, as well as an ability to translate the meaning of this understanding for small town actors. These efforts can help mobilize residents at the small town level and start to challenge negative attitudes of external agencies towards small town level activities (Bishop, 2010; Lawless, 2011). As suggested by van Meerkerk et al. (2017: 183), there is a need to bring together different ‘worlds or domains that speak a different language and function according to different principles, routines and procedures’. Achieving a ‘collaborative advantage’ at the small town level requires more than informational boundary-spanning. It also requires the competences of negotiation, mediation and persuasion (Cash et al., 2003). Through networking across the relevant boundaries, bridges need to be built between various groups and lobbying undertaken on behalf of the CE’s ‘community of place’.

From this discussion a clear research question emerges:

- Can the ‘boundary work’ of CEs be salient to the process of small town revival?

If CE are to be effective boundary organisations, they need to provide a distinctive role that adds to pre-existing governance.

Local legitimacy

Gaining a local legitimacy will be crucial if a CE is to be an effective boundary organization, where successful boundary work on the part of a CE will inevitably lead to some form of redistribution of power that might be seen as a threat to pre-existing governance (van Meerkerk et al., 2017). There are many forms of legitimacy. Formalistic representation gives particular focus to ‘formal procedures of authorisation and accountability’ (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013: 562). Cash et al. (2003: 8086), however, focused on the organisation’s activities, such that legitimacy relates to the degree to which the organisation is ‘respectful of stakeholders’ divergent values and beliefs, unbiased in its conduct, and fair in its treatment of opposing views and interests’ (Cash et al., 2003: 8086). Cash et al.’s (2003) definition of legitimacy links more to ideas of symbolic representation. Symbolic representation relates to the ‘extent to which the representatives serve the interests and preferences of the represented’ (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013: 564). Judgements on such symbolic representation could relate to views about the process of decision making involved and/or the emerging outputs/outcomes. These substantive outputs/outcomes relate to the ‘extent to which the representatives serve the interests and

preferences of the represented' (Davoudi and Cowie, 2013: 564). Partnerships high on substantive legitimacy or 'public value creation' may be highly favoured (Healey, 2015: 22).

The forms of legitimacy important at the small town level is an empirical question. CEs do not follow conventional representative democracy practices and a lack of democratic legitimacy has previously been one of the challenges associated with the acceptance of externally 'imposed' regeneration partnerships (Countryside Agency, 2004; Morris, 2011; Powe and Hart, 2017). However, the need for formal democratic processes may not always be crucial to the achievement of perceived legitimacy. Indeed, Scharpf (1997: 22) suggests it is 'incorrect to discuss the democratic deficit as if it were a general problem', but extends only to 'certain types of policy area in which conflicts of interest and of ideology are endemic'. Trust is important to perceptions of legitimacy and this has to be earned. For places desiring revival, if local residents appreciate the work of CEs, legitimacy is unlikely to come into question (Connelly, 2010; Molden et al., 2017). However, CEs take a long time to become economically viable and generate significant community outputs. Their professional more collaborative approach may also be unwelcome as they strive to build bridges between groups with long standing rivalries and develop a culture more conducive to revival. Although 'small wins' (modest/low risk schemes) may alleviate frustrations and generate positive attitudes towards CEs (Vangen and Huxham, 2003; Powe et al., 2015; Molden et al., 2017), they need to manage expectations if they are to achieve their usual gradual and incremental development trajectory without questions of substantive legitimacy arising (Bailey, 2012). In the context of austerity, there is the additional challenge that the survival of CEs may increasingly require a trade-off between activities for community benefit and revenue-generating activities upon which their business model depends (Varady et al., 2015). An overlap between enterprise and community objectives is by no means certain and trade-offs may have to be made between substantive legitimacy and CE survival (Healey, 2015).

A research question emerges from this discussion:

- Can CEs gain sufficient local legitimacy to undertake their boundary work?

Effective boundary organisations need to achieve local legitimacy and they need to achieve this in the context of austerity.

Becoming a credible partner

Cash et al. (2003) defines credibility in terms of scientific adequacy. In this context, external organisations are likely to judge CE credibility in terms of their professionalism and reputation. However, external audiences often question the credibility of partnerships at the very-local level. For example, Lawless (2011: 530) suggests external organisations are reluctant to 'use their resources to support untried, and potentially troublesome, initiatives' which have been developed locally. External organisations need to feel that CEs have local legitimacy, but also that the information they provide is credible and that they can be trusted as delivery agents. This is particularly the case where external organisations have previously had a bad experience of working with community groups (Kleinhans, 2017). There may however be legal barriers that constrain the involvement of local government with CEs and austerity has brought 'rapid staff turnover and increasing workloads of remaining officials who have even less time to develop relations beyond their organisation' (Kleinhans, 2017: 1511; Healey, 2015). Yet, contracting-out services requires a different approach to service provision that recognises the merits of working with 'small, locally-focused organisations' (Farmer et al., 2008: 459). Statutory service providers may feel that larger suppliers who can operate over a wider area covering many towns are more likely to be cost-effective and convenient to work with. Despite these challenges, the long-term nature of CEs can enable the development, over time, of a

different relationship with external funding bodies, gaining a reputation for successful delivery, and providing an alternative approach to new partnership formation and influencing political priorities (Bailey and Pill, 2011). As external organisations often prefer to work with professionally trained staff, this at least suggests potential for CEs to achieve such collaboration and provide a ‘collective voice’ for towns often ‘ignored by mainstream formal government’ (Connelly, 2010; Healey, 2015: 22).

From this discussion a clear research question emerges:

- Can CEs become credible partners for external organisations/agencies?

Methodology

In exploring alternative forms of governance that may better match the revival process to the challenges faced, CEs may have potential. The literature review has highlighted how pre-existing small town governance based on volunteer partnerships and representative democracy can be inadequate to undertake the required boundary-spanning work for revival. This paper assesses the extent to which CEs are perceived to be legitimate within these towns, viewed as credible by external organisations and salient to the process of small town revival.

Exploring these issues through case studies, selection was aimed to maximising information content (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Initially two ‘successful’ CEs were selected: Amble Development Trust; and Glendale Gateway Trust in Wooler. Both CEs are located within the county of Northumberland in Northern England and might be regarded as exemplars.

One of the key characteristics of CEs is their contingency to respond to different local conditions (Bailey, 2017). Whilst conducive to revival, this contingency is challenging when researching CEs. All CEs are unique and very difficult to categorise/theorise. However, if similarities arise between CEs some tentative generalities may be drawn. In order to explore the wider applicability of the findings in the two case studies, reflections and experiences were also sought from directors within five further towns. These represent ‘contextual’ rather than ‘case study’ interviews.

Most of the research was undertaken within the largely rural county of Northumberland in the North East of England. Within this county, a series of small towns and large villages were encouraged in the 1990s to develop CEs. The approach adopted was initially top-down, with much involvement and control by the district and county councils during the early days of these trusts. What is particularly interesting is how they have evolved organically over time to reflect their towns’ specific needs and helped develop a more collaborative culture. The research for this paper began within the town of Amble, which was the first Northumberland trust established in 1994. Interviews were undertaken with the director of the CE over a period of three years (2013-2015), within which the author was also involved in student projects in the town and regularly attended meetings planning for town revival. During this period of analysis, formal interviews were undertaken in both Amble and Wooler. The research in Wooler was undertaken in 2014-2015 and included attending an annual general meeting. This research builds on Healey’s (2015) personal reflections on the trust in Wooler.

Within Amble and Wooler, interviews were undertaken with directors/managers/employees, town councillors, local authority councillors, local authority development officers and members of other community groups not part of the trusts. In total 16 formal interviews were undertaken across the two case study towns. The interviews in both towns included a number of critical voices. Interviews of directors were also undertaken in the Northumberland towns

of Alnwick, Berwick upon Tweed and Lynemouth. This research culminated in a focus group of directors across the county (7 directors). In order to extend understanding beyond the County of Northumberland, interviews were undertaken with directors in two further towns (Millom (Cumbria, North West England) and Bishop Auckland (County Durham, North East England)), where this interview formed part of wider research into revival efforts within these towns. The topics covered within the interviews related to feelings about the salience of CEs' work to the towns' revival processes, the impact of their activities, how they conducted their efforts, local feeling towards the trusts, the extent of boundary work undertaken, their external credibility and their overall success. Where possible, the semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed. Based on the conceptual framework outlined above, thematic analysis of the interviews was undertaken. Given the sensitivities involved in this project, it is not possible to give further details of those interviewed and quotes are anonymous. However, for most of the quotes an indication is given as to the type of interviewee responding.

Whilst the degree of representativeness of these towns is difficult to determine, they do represent a wide range of contexts and experiences in terms of CE formation, stages of development and outcomes. Alnwick and Millom were insightful because trusts have ceased to operate in these towns. The CE in Bishop Auckland is interesting because it was formed without public support and combined with Berwick-upon-Tweed reflect larger towns of over 20,000 population. Lynemouth Trust is insightful as, in response to the challenge of having a depressed local population/demand for services and a lack of amenity opportunities for tourism, the Trust have successfully setup and run two manufacturing businesses that, instead of being locally focused, sell their goods to more lucrative markets outside the area.

Case study community enterprises

The case studies of Amble and Wooler are consistent with what Bailey (2017) describes as community development trusts and provide an asset-owning subset of CEs. Their characteristics are summarised in Table 1. As with all CEs, Amble and Wooler trusts run enterprises in their 'community of place' (Somerville and McElwee, 2011). In the case of Amble, the 'community of place' is the town, whereas the Wooler Trust supports the area of the former Glendale Rural District Council (abolished in 1973) that included the town and its hinterland. Whilst providing a different function to the former Glendale council, interviewees suggested their 'community of place' was still recognised as meaningful within the area. The 'community of place' for both trusts contain a mixture of affluence and deprivation, with a lack of external private sector involvement in these locations. In terms of their legal structure, consistent with the typology by Mswaka and Aluko (2014), Amble Development Trust (ADT) and Glendale Gateway Trust (GGT) are not-for-profit and limited by guarantee. These organisations are held in stewardship by a board of trustees, elected by members. Membership is open to anyone within the 'community of place'. They are registered charities. Indeed, they take on a range of identities that provide different opportunities for improving the towns (community development organisation, a community land trust, a social enterprise, trading arm and a registered social housing provider). The 'contextual' CEs visited also have a similar legal structure and also take on a variety of identities to suit the local opportunities emerging. In Amble and Wooler most of the key local stakeholders are trustees (councillors, local business people, representatives of residential groups). Sub-committees are also formed on key issues with wider membership to help ensure a wider engagement and community consultation events are common on key issues/projects. The ADT produces a free local newspaper that is delivered to every house in the town that helps enhance its visibility and understanding of the key issues arising. In both towns, people are encouraged to just drop-in for a chat to the CE office and this was observed working effectively during the period of study.

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Amble

Amble is a coastal town with approximately 6,500 residents and located about 45 minutes by car from the city of Newcastle upon Tyne. Whilst a former Victorian ‘boom town’ providing the port for local coal mines, since their closure in the late 1960s the town has been struggling to regenerate itself and find a new purpose. By the 1990s Amble was a neglected place and lacking investment from either the public or the private sector. Much blame was placed on the town council, which operated within strict guidelines and was unable to access external funding. Set up initially through local authority funding, the ADT was established in 1994 in order to attempt to obtain external funding and try to strengthen local capacity to regenerate the town. As the director explained, ADT was ‘meant to have a life expectancy of 6 years – by then all the regeneration was going to be complete – the development trust would disappear ... and we were never going to need regeneration again’. This was clearly naive and 25 years later ADT is still playing an important role within the continued regeneration of Amble. The town is gradually becoming a tourist destination and ADT has been involved in most of the key physical projects that have slowly improved the town (market place and other public realm improvement; regeneration of redundant property; provision of affordable housing; and a tourism oriented ‘harbour village’ development run as a trading arm). The Trust has benefited from a range of funding sources including the Rural Development Programme for England, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the regional development agency One NorthEast, English Heritage, Big Lottery Children’s Play Fund, Section 106 (planning gain) from housing development and the local authority. The reputation of the town is gradually transforming from an undesirable run-down former coal town to an increasingly attractive place to visit.

Over 25 years, ADT has seen changes in political colour at the national and local levels, a range of initiatives and a regional development agency has come and gone. Throughout this period, ADT has maintained a sustained and consistent interest in Amble, working to manage its regeneration through its boundary work, which includes aiding development of local strategies, providing professional skills to help understand and take advantage of external opportunities, networking within the town, leading and supporting projects, influencing others to enhance town management and facilitating voluntary local activity. As such, ADT has acted on behalf of its ‘community of place’ rather than being focused purely on its core businesses. The size of ADT has varied over the period and in times of austerity has become more focused on becoming self-supporting. As with GGT, ADT is now free from support grant. Its main income comes from renting out its buildings that were purchased, rebuilt and refitted through public funding (including workspace, affordable housing, shops and public space). The director argued that without the effective use of these assets, ADT would have folded. These buildings are unlikely to have been regenerated through the market and would have remained underused and, in most cases, an eyesore within the town. They are now actively contributing to the town’s vitality.

Wooler

In a separate process to the formation of the ADT, a community development worker was employed in the mid-1990s in five small struggling towns in Northumberland to ask the question ‘what does this community need in the future?’ There was no local body in any of the towns to take on the agendas emerging from this research. A CE was created in four of the towns and all four were still operating at the time of writing. The GGT was formed in 1996 in Wooler and is the most successful of the four trusts.

In comparison to most small towns in England, Wooler with approximately 2,000 residents is relatively rural, being one-hour's drive from the nearest large urban area, and half an hour from a larger town. The town suffers from a range of challenges (in particular a lack of affordable housing and derelict buildings). Over a long-running process of incremental change, the GGT has been successful in alleviating these challenges in a manner appropriate to its local needs, where the efforts have been focused on 'trying to bring new life into buildings and rid the place of this sense of dereliction' (CE Trustee). GGT now owns a series of buildings in the town centre (affordable housing, retail and business spaces, youth drop-in centre and a combined community and business hub). They also own a youth hostel elsewhere in the town, which would otherwise have closed in a location dependent on tourism. Each of the buildings revived have their own story and required much boundary work to purchase and to bring them back into meaningful use. GGT's first project was to take over a former district council building that now provides a community hub (library, tourist information and community centre), business hub (with a range of office facilities in active usage) and Trust offices. These properties have been renovated largely through government grants, but also some private loans from local individuals. The trustees have also been, at times, liable for significant sums, with no potential for private financial gain. There are still challenges in the town, but the success of the trust has clearly helped. The GGT has benefited from similar funding sources to Amble, but has also benefited significantly at key points in its development from local residents making loans and donations. GGT assets are generating revenue such that in the financial year 2017-2018 the Trust achieved a cash surplus from its activities.

Inadequacy of pre-existing governance

An initial motivation for setting up some CEs was a culture in local governance that was unfavourable to place-based revival. This culture often related to resistance to change ('well that is the way we have always done it'; 'views can be so entrenched'), an unwillingness to let go of previous place representations ('they just want it to be as it was') and perhaps also a dependency/complaining/blame culture ('looking for the outside to come and sort their problems for them. Rather than sort the problem internally'). As a CE trustee explained 'previously it was one of shouting at the local authority - now it is – this is happening what can we do about it?'. Indeed, in Amble and Wooler the CEs have helped create instead more of a 'can-do' culture.

During the interviews, stories emerged of divisions resulting from individuals following their own, or their political parties', interests. As suggested by a local authority employee:

You have a lot of disparate groups who all operate in their own little world, and they don't necessarily come together. You do not have one consolidated view where they all say this is where we are going. And actually, in some respects, all of the disparate groups work against each other.

As another CE director stated: 'there is no vision. A lack of awareness of the bigger picture'. A cultural change was needed (or still is needed) in many of the towns to allow a more collaborative and 'can do' culture. Revival requires strategic thinking, networking and risk-taking. Local authorities, whilst helpful to place-based revival, are 'risk averse and a [CE] has the capacity to work at a quicker pace ... not burdened with the processes that the local authorities have' (CE director). Town councils were thought to be too constrained by the rigors of representative democracy ('they are quite restricted in terms of what they can do'). As a CE director suggested, politicians are 'tied up in red tape and you get shot down if you step out of those boundaries – things would not move on if we depended on politicians'. CEs can be more flexible and innovative in their approach.

Salience of CE boundary work

Cash et al. (2003) defines salience in terms of relevance to the needs of decision makers. Through being a source of information, translator for the local communities and negotiator/mediator between different actors, these organisations have undertaken significant boundary-spanning work that has involved community actors (including residents, employers, town councils and community-based partnerships) and a range of external actors (including local authorities, other servicing agencies, external funding bodies and the private sector). Whilst their work is salient to small town regeneration, there is a need to be realistic as to its efficacy in achieving this goal. The salience of their boundary activity is demonstrated through a few illustrations.

Stimulating local volunteer activity

Within a deprived context, a key concern is often an absence of sufficient local activity. In addition to their social enterprises themselves, CEs have also helped to stimulate local volunteer activity by providing an umbrella organisation that acts as an ‘enabler’ within their area. Through providing a professional long-term ‘anchor’ they have supported many activities. Without the knowledge of what can and cannot be done in terms of regulation, the support of a bank account, a charity number under which to operate, training on how to get the most out of volunteers, and the credibility of the CE, the activities of volunteers are unlikely to have been as effective in Amble and Wooler. The CEs have also played an important role in initiating activity by leading on projects that, if successful, are taken over by others. Whilst realities of austerity mean that CEs ‘can’t take on too much’ (CE director), they continue to aid many voluntary activities within the towns including community groups, festivals and improving the public realm. These efforts are supported by officer time and, for example, ADT contribute over £70,000 each year to community projects.

Attempting to provide a catalyst for private sector investment

Amble has struggled to find a new purpose since the pits closed in the late 1960s. It has a comparatively large industrial estate for the size of the town. As was explained by the CE director ‘factories have tried to do business here ... but the added cost [of the rural location] just prohibits them– we have lost them ... I cannot build a factory on the industrial estate unfortunately. And there isn’t anybody else coming forward to do that’. The loss of a food processing factory with a workforce of 250 in 2010 led to a working group being set up by the Trust to find an employment generating alternative for this land. Ideas were developed in terms of local food, but could not be delivered on a sufficient scale to make it work on the industrial site. In the context of a collaborative culture towards creating employment and led by ADT, the local groups worked together with the local authority to secure £1.8m from the UK government in 2015 to create Amble Harbour Village. This development included 15 small retail ‘pods’ run by local businesses selling art, crafts, food and drink and helped improve linkages between the harbour to the rest of the town. ADT also runs a seafood centre on the site and, through its collaboration with Newcastle University, has set up a lobster hatchery on the Harbour Village site, to help sustain local fisheries and act as a visitor attraction. Following the development of Amble Harbour Village, private-sector harbour-side housing was built that also helped link up further paths on the harbour side. Led by the local authority rather than CE, a £4m private sector hotel opened on the industrial estate in 2019. In the absence of market activity, however, it was the CE that led the initial project to bring in government funding. The industrial estate is expected to shrink further with the building of new housing, but the town does seem to be developing a future as a leisure attraction.

Tackling 'wicked' problems

Just like the trust in Amble, GDT have also been involved with a number of successful projects. An interesting one in this context is the regeneration of some key high street buildings and a yard previously in a state of 'absolute dereliction' containing a former power station, bakery and dairy (CE trustee). Retail decline within the town as well as the arrival of mains electricity had led to this site being vacant since the 1970s. Although efforts had been made to find a new future for the site, as a trustee explained: 'the private sector and the public sector had failed on this site'. Initial conversations by the GDT concerning this site began in 1997, where there was a feeling that 'nobody else was going to help us if we weren't going to help ourselves' (CE trustee). The properties and brownfield land were purchased using a substantial loan from a local private benefactor, but there was a significant shortfall and approximately 40% of the cost of purchase needed to be paid for through a private loan for which all the voluntary trustees were liable. As a trustee explained 'speaking personally that was just an enormous risk'. As this was too large a project for the Trust to develop themselves, this land was later sold to a registered social landlord for clearance of the yard and delivery of the social houses. However, the role of GDT dealing within these external investors was crucial in its regeneration, where, as a councillor explained, GDT had 'more expertise in bringing in funders than the local authority'. This project was supported by national government funding (Single Programme), Berwick Borough Council and EU's LEADER+ programme.

Although successful boundary work was undertaken, it was challenging. As a trustee reported: 'we were a small trust and we were negotiating with a big organisation run very professionally and had a lot of years of experience as a housing association'. As well as working with this external agency, the trusts boundary work within the local area was also crucial, particularly when they discovered invasive species on the site they had purchased. Remedial work from an outside firm would have been 'very very expensive', but through their connections they managed to get a local firm to do it at a 'fraction of the initial quote' (CE trustee). Without this local support, the scheme may not have been viable.

A year before competition of the affordable housing, further retail decline occurred in the building next door. These properties were purchased by the Trust in 2008 and resulted in a further project, involving further affordable housing and retail. This smaller project was delivered directly by the trust. The three retail units involved had very few facilities. Using their connections again, local businesses with a desire to expand were found to rent these properties and a bespoke refitting was undertaken by the Trust. This work was undertaken prior to austerity and more public funding was available at that time. Bringing the town centre discussion more up-to-date, when the town's only remaining supermarket moved to the end of the street into a refurbished pub, GDT was able to work with the developer and, with the support of further national government funding (Homes and Communities Agency empty properties fund), new affordable housing was built above the new store in 2015. However, purchasing the redundant supermarket unit from the middle of the high street was simply not viable, despite it being an eyesore. Whilst continuing to be successful in providing affordable housing, there are limits to the degree to which GDT can deal with an oversupply of retail space in the town. A common issue across many of the towns visited was 'too much retail space' and represents a challenge faced throughout the UK (DTCPT, 2013). Incrementally and over many years perhaps solutions may be found for the remaining empty retail properties, but managing expectations about the efficacy of GDT to achieve this remains a challenge. Sadly, the activities of the GDT within this remote town have not been a catalyst for significant private sector investment in the high street.

Local legitimacy

Key to sustaining a process of revival is achieving local legitimacy. This required acceptance of the CE and its approach to revival. In one of the contextual towns local legitimacy was not achieved. This process of acceptance was also challenging in the case of Amble, for example.

During the lifetime of ADT, there would appear to have been a slow learning process for both the CE and the other forms of local governance. The process of its acceptance was challenging and took over a decade. There have been tensions between the town council and ADT, but the town council is now located within the main Trust building and their combined social role strengthens local governance. There would also appear to have been a cultural change towards more collaboration within the town and the feeling of a common vision for revival. This has been achieved through the substantive legitimacy that followed a series of successful projects. The collaborative party-politics-free culture of ADT, seen as a key to its success, has extended to the town council such that efforts now focus more on the needs of the town rather than party-politics. Of course, disagreements continue, but as a local councillor suggested: 'this is a small place, so working together is the only way to go about it'. Whilst not free from local tensions, the GGT trust would appear to have received a more favourable reception from the town council and other local actors than initially experienced in Amble. Since its original conception, the GGT has evolved considerably as the trustees have become more local, rather than dominated by external actors, and it has got larger than any other CE in the county.

Successful CEs remain focused on the delivery of public value through their activities. Clearly, this will always remain a challenge. Ultimately, CEs are judged on their substantive outputs/outcomes and, to a lesser extent, their symbolic representation of their 'community of place' ('we have to be judged on what we produce and the way we produce it' (CE trustee)). Indeed, as a CE director suggested, there is a need to 'be very cautious about things that are generally unpopular'. However, as the director elaborated, in times of austerity 'we have to think all the time whether we are going to be able to cover our core costs'. The challenge of balancing enterprise and community objectives remains an important constraint on local legitimacy. When success occurs, a CE director explained 'you try to give the credit to everybody'. As also explained by a trustee, this can help prevent unwanted 'political band standing' which would introduce party politics into the process. Shared credit also helps alleviate any jealousy that might result from successful projects being attributed to the CE. It was seen as important to realise 'it is not about having a high profile. It is about having a profile which is appropriate to the work you are trying to do'. Political visibility can be counterproductive.

Other forms of legitimacy were also discussed in the interviews. For example, a number of interviewees noted the imperfect electoral system in rural areas ('standing unopposed and elected on the basis of three or four hundred votes' (CE director)). Successful CEs are 'seen as approachable people with names and faces, rather than as some kind of abstract body' (Healey, 2015: 21). More generally, the CE employees are answerable to their trustees. As one trustee and elected councillor noted they 'can't do anything that we don't approve of', where activities have to be agreed at trustee meetings, with Chairs' action in between. The trustees are usually elected by members and membership is usually open to all adults within their 'community of place'. As a CE director suggested 'if you don't like what we are doing, become a member, come to the AGM, stand for the board, be elected and be part of the process which sets the agenda which I work to'. Ultimately, however, as a trustee explained 'small bodies ... have to constantly learn that you are building a track record for yourself. You are only as good as your last project. You are only as good as your ability to deliver'.

Becoming a credible organisation

Often CEs played the roles of translation and informing local actors of the external opportunities arising, where a mayor explained how otherwise he would not have known what the external actors were ‘talking about’. Over time, CEs can also develop excellent links and a good reputation with external individuals and organisations (‘bringing external people to the table’ (CE director)). Their charitable status can also be useful in attracting external support and gaining a reputation as a reliable delivery agent and information source on the local needs and challenges. In the absence of such boundary work, frustrations can emerge (‘if only they had talked to us, we had the knowledge to make this work’ (local business owner)).

Whilst CEs take on projects themselves, some will be simply too large for any local organisation and require the pooling of local resources. CEs were viewed as adding to the ‘core of locally based professionals’ (local councillor) which is helping to manage such revival efforts. In terms of external organisations, boundary-spanning ranged from enhanced political attention for the town’s issues and concerns, to influencing policy/investment decisions, with the former being more likely than the latter. Indeed, it was suggested by a CE director that external organisations were ‘tweaking [their activities] on our [town’s] behalf, they are informing us and saying what is coming’. The main external influence of CEs is usually around their key activities, for example social housing. Achieving local respect and external influence requires constant effort, as the ‘organisations that you should network to, or people you should network to, in one period will not be the same in the next period, because things are always changing’ (CE director). The reputation of ADT and GGT as delivery agents has enabled them to continue, as noted above, to access significant public funding post 2008. Other funding, for example, includes GDT gaining £200,000 for the development of wooden office pods to expand their business hub in 2013 as part of the national Rural Growth Network pilot.

Whilst it is clear that CEs can be seen as credible organisations by external bodies, frustrations were however also noted. Even in the more successful CEs, the reality remained that they were just one small organisation from one small town competing for political visibility and funding. As a CE director stated regarding an external service provider: ‘they are a big company specialising in [an activity] – they question how we can know better than they do – and that has really been a difficult relationship’. It has been demonstrated within Amble and Wooler, for example, how local linkages have helped in gaining cheaper contractors, volunteer support and increased operational efficiency. By being locally networked and closer to the customers, better/more cost effective services can sometimes be provided that are also more flexible to local needs.

Challenges of dual accountability

The success of a boundary organization involves achieving a ‘dual accountability’. Whilst it has been demonstrated how in Amble significant boundary work was required to achieve a collaborative culture, ‘dual accountability’ is seen here to be between town level and external organisations. Building on the work of Cash et al. (2003), this is through achieving both local legitimacy and external credibility. In summarising this ‘dual accountability’ a trustee suggested they are working ‘both within the dimensions of the community which our trust feels that is our special orientation, but also externally in order to bring resources and understanding from outside inside’. A director of another CE suggested ultimately, ‘you have to deliver what the community want or the community don’t want you as an organisation’ (CE director). A policy coherence is required, whereby small town calls for attention are aligned with the priorities of external organisations. Achieving such a coherence is challenging. As the director

went on to explain: ‘the community might want A, B and C and the government want X, Y and Z’. Merely delivering X, Y and Z could mean you ‘lose the community’.

Supporting CEs in the context of austerity

As noted by Healey (2015: 23), the ‘origins and growth [of CEs] have been very dependent on public agency support – through asset transfer, knowledge resources, financial investment and a supportive attitude’. So what are the prospects of gaining policy attention for CEs in the context of austerity? As suggested by Taylor (2003: 60), ‘too much of an emphasis on the virtues of civic society neglects the role of the state in creating the conditions within which these virtues can be developed’. In a small town context, an anonymous interviewee noted they are further challenged to gain funding as politicians/policy makers at all levels are ‘reluctant to do something positive for an area if they consider it to be marginal, insignificant or small’.

CEs are not a ‘quick fix’ that would satisfy the need for political expediency. These organisations take many years to develop and their success is uncertain. The activities of successful CEs are also not immediately evident. A CE director noted how he/she had: ‘a list of achievements on [their] website and it is quite impressive [but] a tiny number of people would identify it with us. Some of that is about profile, but some of it is about the incremental nature [of progress] ... I think there is something about the way we fail to appreciate things happen slowly’. Support for CEs requires flexibility and local interpretation of their governance needs and, as such, difficult to frame within the context of government funding (Bailey, 2012; Kleinhans, 2017).

Consistent with the findings of Bailey (2012), the case evidence within this paper suggests the larger the portfolio of commercial activities the more likely the CEs were to be viable. Enhancing the potential of CEs, however, also requires the continued start-up of new enterprises. Operating in deprived locations often neglected by all but local private sector agents, there may be a ‘mismatch between policy expectations and the lived reality of community-based social entrepreneurship’, where serious questions are raised in terms of the feasibility of setting up a commercial concern (Wallace, 2002; Steinerowski and Steinerowska-Streb, 2012: 178). Whilst, as noted above, the Lynemouth CE has set-up manufacturing businesses that are not dependent on local demand, public funding was required at each stage of the enterprises’ development. As suggested by a CE director, ‘it is a place where the market isn’t interested so you have really got to be creative’. Part of this creativity involves gaining external charitable/public funding.

Most CEs are started through public subsidy, perhaps to ‘acquire assets, that is, buildings, land, or other sources which they can draw capital to run their business’ (Kleinhans, 2017:1502). Whilst Valchovska and Watts (2016) provide an example of a community-based social enterprise that was established without charitable external support, such examples are rare. CEs are risk-taking organisations and some do go into liquidation. As with profit-seeking small businesses, debt financing is rare, where CEs suffer from ‘limited operating history’ and are ‘informationally opaque’ (Cassar, 2004: 264). This ‘opaqueness’ highlights the risks involved in supporting CEs. As charities, CEs can apply for external grants and appeal for donor funding, but the task of assessing their potential externally is challenging. Equity finance is not permitted within the not-for-profit form most common in the UK (Mswaka and Aluko, 2014). Whilst there are other legal structures that would permit equity finance in the UK, introducing the principle of financial reward may be problematic in terms of local legitimacy and perhaps also the lack of control in terms of their activities. Most CE directors suggested

experiencing feelings of distrust as they try to revive their ‘community of place’: ‘what is in it for you?’. As awareness of CE potential increases, perhaps wider public funding may be forthcoming.

Ultimately, it is the trading arm of CEs that determines whether their community role can be sustained. Being aware of their ‘core business’ would appear to be a key factor in the success of CEs during austerity. For example, a CE director suggested ‘projects will start, they will finish ... it is about being aware that they are time-limited opportunities – they will end’. In the context of austerity, trusts have had to be increasingly selective in what they take on and less generous to other community organisations. Success within CEs relies on ‘having assets and making them work for you’ (CE director). There is a need to ‘look at the business case – can we afford it?; what is the bottom line?; who does it benefit?; does it benefit the community?; and is it sustainable [in the funding sense]?’ (Councillor). As suggested by Healey (2015), whilst crucial to the longevity of the CEs, focusing on the core business inevitably restricts the time available for community activities and perhaps the degree to which substantive legitimacy can be achieved.

Conclusion

Whilst small towns located close to large urban areas, with heritage-related assets and/or within areas of natural amenity often have much potential for amenity-led revival, not all towns benefit from such favourable conditions. For many towns, revival, or even stabilisation, is a long-term complex/multi-dimensional process, involving many actors and locally specific issues. As ‘moments of opportunity’ are rare, there is a need for local governance innovation to prepare for, and help create, potentialities for revival. By critically reviewing previous literature on CEs and analysing the results of interviews within a range of towns and contexts, this paper has explored the degree to which CEs can become effective boundary organisations to help meet the revival challenge.

Consistent with previous literature, this research has illustrated the inadequacies of pre-existing forms of governance, where there is a need for boundary organisations to aid revival efforts by combining professional expertise with an understanding of local and external politics. This support is required to help achieve a ‘can-do’ culture of collaboration and consensus, which is open to new ideas, empathic to other perspectives, with an awareness that small towns need to make the most of the support that might be available from external organisations. Externally imposing such a culture has previously proven to be ineffective (Powe et al., 2015). Working at the boundary between the relevant actors within the community (residents, employers, town councils and community-based partnerships) and at the boundary between town level actors and the relevant external actors (regeneration funding bodies, local authorities and other servicing agencies) there is a need for the boundary-spanning competencies of translation, negotiation, mediation and persuasion. This is in addition to the planning skills required to address the practical challenges of complex revival issues. ‘Going it alone’ without professional support is likely to lack capacity and may be difficult to sustain. External support for town-level officers has previously proven to be unsustainable, whereas, consistent with the academic literature, representative democracy was perceived to be party rather than place orientated, risk averse and lacking innovation in their approach to otherwise intractable challenges (Boyle, 1993; Countryside Agency, 2004; Rose, 2005; Molden et al., 2017).

Based on Cash et al.’s (2003) boundary organisation framework, three research questions emerged from the literature review to assess whether CEs can be effective within small town revival. As far as the author is aware, this is the first paper to use this conceptual framework

in the context of place-based regeneration. It is extremely helpful as it focuses attention not just on their salience to small town governance, but also the realities and challenges of also achieving a 'dual accountability' of local legitimacy and external credibility, without which the revival process is unlikely to be successful. Issues of legitimacy and credibility have often been neglected within previous policy formation efforts (Connelly, 2010; Powe et al., 2015; Molden et al., 2017).

The first research question relates to the need for CEs to be salient to the process of small town revival. The unique potential of CEs in terms of small town revival comes from their professional skills, enterprise underpinnings and their focus on their 'community of place'. As demonstrated through the case studies, the key to longevity for CEs is to put their assets to productive use, which are of benefit directly or indirectly to their 'community of place'. Their enterprise underpinning enables a degree of independence from transitory political priorities, political satisfaction and expediency. It also allows risk taking and innovation unlikely within the constraints of representative democracy. Whilst some CEs fail to become economically viable, the cases of Amble and Wooler illustrate how they have potential to provide long-term revival support. It is the bringing together of professional skills contained within CEs that has been the focus of this paper and their boundary-spanning activity has helped introduce a more collaborative culture within these towns. CE competences in boundary work have been demonstrated through the ability of CEs to help address governance (such as longstanding rivalries and resistance to change) and practical (such as long-term abandoned buildings in key locations) 'wicked' revival challenges that have proven to be otherwise intractable. CEs also have the ability to act as a pioneer in locations where there is very little private sector activity and, acting as a professional 'anchor', can encourage significant volunteer activity unlikely otherwise to occur.

Achieving such salience of activity requires a 'dual accountability' of local legitimacy and external credibility. This brings together the second and third research questions, where CE directors interviewed were very much aware of the need for this 'dual accountability' and the challenges of its achievement. Realising local legitimacy, the second research question, represents a challenging process that may be resolved through necessity, demonstration or, in the case of one of the contextual towns, ended in failure. There is potential for jealousy and suspicion to be associated with new forms of small town governance, where CE culture may not be locally accepted. Whilst necessity to improve depressed situations may encourage more collaborative working, ultimately, acceptance is likely to come through demonstration of its success in terms of substantive outputs/outcomes. During the process of CE acceptance, it may be necessary to seek a lower profile and focus on generating a successful enterprise that is sensitive to local needs. Even for successful CEs, such as in Ambler and Wooler, there is a constant need to maintain local legitimacy, where balancing enterprise and community objectives in the context of austerity remains a significant challenge. Local expectations of what CEs can achieve needs to be managed.

The third research question relates to the need for CEs to become credible partners for external organisations/agencies. In practice this means gaining a reputation as a reliable source of local information and as a delivery agent for projects and/or the delivery of services. Whilst previous literature suggests that external organisations often question the credibility of local partnerships (Bishop, 2010; Lawless, 2011), the professional nature of CE staff provides potential for collaboration and has led, for example, to the case study trusts accessing significant government funding post 2008. This case study material also illustrates how through local linkages CEs can help deliver projects cheaper, enable volunteer support within delivery and

be more sensitive to local requirements. However, as they remain just one small organisation from one small town competing for political visibility and funding, achieving external credibility remains a challenge.

Although CEs have much potential they are not a panacea. As noted by Clark et al. (2007: 256), there is 'no such thing as a model social enterprise, or model of best practice, that could be transplanted and encouraged through standardised policy interventions'. Whilst "success" was seen as a product of a range of place-specific factors', lessons from CEs and social enterprises more generally, in a range of contexts, suggest that success is broader than a few exemplar cases (Clark et al., 2007: 256). CE success requires the coming together of a number of factors that will vary between places, but may be achievable within many contexts given time, entrepreneurial skill, patience and local leadership/passion for success. Whilst success is not universal, few alternative approaches offer such potential.

One of the key challenges facing CEs is their set-up and slow development path. They are not a 'quick fix' and, due to their enterprise nature, they are risky ventures. Whilst CEs can better match the process to the revival challenge, their incremental development path does not match the usual requirement of 'transitory and generic support for rapid delivery' nature of public funding (Powe et al., 2015: 178). They are not conducive to the need for 'political expediency' and, particularly in the context of austerity, only CEs with a proven delivery record are likely to be popular with risk averse policy makers. As each CE has to find its 'own route to development' (Kleinhans, 2017:1505), the tensions between highly prescriptive external organisations and the need for local flexibility remains. There is a need for wider recognition of CE potential within place-based revival and a better understanding of the factors affecting their success. This paper has added to this understanding. Small town revival requires a long-term continuous build-up of positive activity. In deprived contexts CEs can provide hope that this will occur, but they will require public financial support if they are to be viable particularly in their early years.

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Table 1: Summary of cases study towns

Town	Amble	Wooler
Name of trust	Amble Development Trust	Glendale Gateway Trust
Community of place	Town	Town and hinterland
Legal structure	Not for profit and limited by guarantee + trading company (Harbour village)	Not for profit and limited by guarantee
Trustees	14 (local)	9 (local)
Staff	3	8
Income (2017-2018)	£173,800 (mostly property rental)	£300,210 (mostly property rental)
Assets (2017-2018)	£2,253,083	£2,654,000
Services/products	Affordable housing, retail properties, office facilities, lobster, employment counselling, media and IT projects, operate leisure facilities, produce range of preserves (e.g. jam).	Affordable housing, youth hostel property, office facilities, retail property, community centre and facilities for a youth drop-in centre and other community projects.